CITIZEN UNIVERSITY
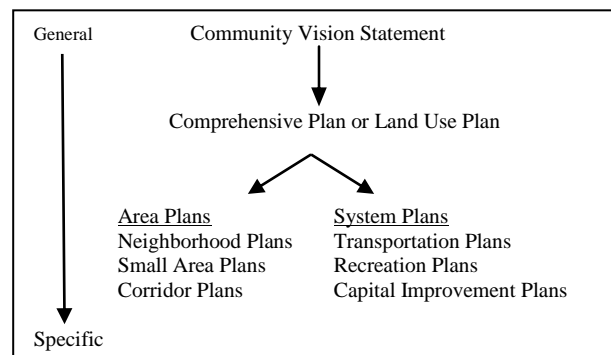## Understanding Planning, Development and Building in High Point

Introduction to Planning

Though you may not realize it, planning affects everyone in High Point on a daily basis by guiding the City's future growth and development and determining how property can be used in ways that benefit both the property owner and the broader community. The ultimate goal of planning is to facilitate the best use of the City's land resources and to help create a vibrant and healthy community for our citizens. The City's planning authority is established by the State in Chapter 160A, Article 19 of the North Carolina General Statutes.

You might be asking yourself the question, "What do planners do?" This can be a tough question to answer, even for planners, since planning involves many different subjects and disciplines. In short, a planner's job is to work with the community to create plans that provide a vision for the community's future and then implement the plans to make the vision a reality. Plans that provide guidance for the community's growth range from the very broad to very specific. The Comprehensive Plan or Land Use Plan is the overarching general plan that gives guidance on a broad range of general topics such as housing, transportation economic development, parks and recreation. Planners helped to create the City's Land Use Plan, which is a written document that, in combination with a Land Use Plan Map, acts as a general guide for how land within the City should be used in the future. This plan, which is updated periodically, includes a variety of information on all aspects of High Point and outlines goals, objectives and policies for how the City should grow in the future. The more specific plans typically fall into two general categories: area plans and system plans. The following is a list, by category, of some of the plans that the City of High Point has adopted and is in the process of implementing:

General

Community Vision Statement

↓

Comprehensive Plan or Land Use Plan

Area Plans
Neighborhood Plans
Small Area Plans
Corridor Plans

System Plans
Transportation Plans
Recreation Plans
Capital Improvement Plans

Specific

Community Vision Statement:
Community Growth Vision Statement

Comprehensive Plan:
Land Use Plan for the High Point Planning Area

Area Plans:
Core City Plan
Washington Drive Plan
Eastchester Drive Corridor Plan
Johnson Street/Sandy Ridge Area Plan
Northeast Davidson Area Plan
Business 85 Corridor Plan

System Plans
Long Range Transportation Plan
Comprehensive Recreation Master Plan
Greenways Master Plan
Capital Improvement Plan
Community Facilities Plan

(The majority of these plans can be accessed on the City's website)

Public involvement is the foundation of the planning process since decisions regarding a community's growth and development ultimately affect everyone. Planners work to provide opportunities for the public to participate in the planning process. While an effective planning process may take some time, it allows anyone with an interest to provide input on the community's future. Public discussion and comment from all areas of the city is needed to arrive at a consensus, or general agreement, on what the community as a whole thinks are the important goals and objectives it wants to achieve.

Once the goals and objectives are determined, and the plans are created, city leaders must put implementation measures in place. Planners then work to interpret and enforce those implementation measures. Plans are implemented through regulatory tools, public investment, and education which can often lead to public/private partnerships. Regulatory tools are the rules that are typically enforced by the local government. Examples of regulatory tools are: zoning, subdivision control, housing codes, building codes, and watershed protection laws. Public investment involves the provision – primarily through the use of tax money

or bonds - of infrastructure such as: potable water, sewerage collection and treatment, public transportation, and parks. It is also the planner's job to educate and promote the implementation of the city's plans to the public. Public education facilitates the implementation of the items that are typically not under the control of the city, such as revitalization of private property.

Beyond making plans, planners work to help guide growth and development and protect and enhance the quality of the community by:
- aiding in solving particular community problems;
- working to minimize adverse impacts of incompatible adjacent land uses;
- helping to secure appropriate sites for future industrial and commercial development and to improve job opportunities;
- revitalizing depressed areas and improving housing in particular neighborhoods;
- advocating quality development and an aesthetically pleasing community environment;
- making recommendations for infrastructure improvements and the efficient provision of public services; and
- administering and enforcing environmental regulations that help protect our environment, natural resources, and drinking water supply.

Another part of a planner's job is to gather and analyze social and economic data for a community, evaluating its strengths and weakness and determining both positive and negative trends. This is extremely important since a community must understand where it is right now in order to adequately plan for the future. When someone is interested in finding out the basic characteristics of a city, where growth is occurring now and where it will occur in the future, the planning department is typically one of the first stops for such information.

Although the terms "planning" and "zoning" are closely related, when it comes to the development of a piece of land it is important to understand the difference between the two. Generally speaking, planning sets a broad vision for where various types of uses are considered appropriate and provides guidance on how to achieve this vision, while zoning is a specific set of rules and regulations that establishes the uses allowed on a particular property, the size and placement of buildings, and other aspects related to the physical development of the land. For more information on zoning refer to the "Introduction to Zoning" course.

For additional information about this topic, e-mail the Citizen University faculty using the link on our home page.